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The Jewish Quarterly Review.

OCTOBER, 1890.

THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, THE NEW TESTA- MENT, AND THE RABBINICAL LITERATURE.

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT.

RIGHTLY to understand the drift of the following notes, it should be realised *in limine*, first, that throughout the Old Testament Divine retribution belongs to Time and not to Eternity. It is brought about by direct intervention in the affairs of this world. It takes the form of what are known as "judgments,"—judgments on the nation and judgments on the individual in the form of national or personal calamities. Secondly, in harmony with the traditional solidarity of the national and family life, there was a universally-accepted theory of joint and several responsibility for sin, and these retributive judgments might fall upon the subject for the sin of the king, on the son for the sin of the father, on the nation for the sin of the individual.

So long as the collectivism of Israel was absolutely unquestioned this theory was unassailed. But with the first glimmerings of individualism and the first seeking after abstract ideals, situations necessarily arose which put the old theory in sharp conflict with elementary notions of justice. Then follows a long series of attempts to reconcile the time-honoured view with the growing conception of true and Divine justice, a period of ingenious compromises and some casuistry, of alternate fitful advances towards higher ideals and of retrogression towards the earlier position.

A belief in a God who punishes and rewards is not wanting in the oldest portions of the Hebrew Scriptures; such a belief implies that the conception of Deity has already been partially moralized, and that God has acquired ethical attributes, though, possibly, not yet an ethical character.¹ For punishment and reward are not equivalent to anger and favour; they are dealt out upon principles, which, though frequently crude and arbitrary in their earliest applications, are capable of moral development and purification.

Let us note some of the characteristics of the earlier methods of Divine retribution in the Old Testament, and then see how far the principles which underlie them were retained or modified in later ages.

(1.) The God of antiquity, more especially of Semitic antiquity, is the God of the tribe or nation, not of the individual. To this rule Yahveh is no exception. He is the upholder of the social order, and the avenger of outraged public sentiment. The prosperity of the people as a whole, not that of its separate units, occupies his concern. Thus upon solemn occasions, when important maxims of social morality have been impudently violated, God is supposed to interfere, and society discerns in any misfortune, which ultimately befalls the wrongdoer or his family, the avenging agency of Supernatural Power (Judges ix. 24, 56, 57).² Hence, too, it is that the nascent religious consciousness is not alarmed by the distress of the righteous or the prosperity of the wicked. A lack of individualism excludes such puzzles.

(2.) In pre-prophetic times, Yahveh does not exclusively, or even mainly, avenge the violation of public morality; he is also greatly concerned to punish offences against himself. Such offences he deals with in a summary manner, and his retribution passes into his wrath. For though the post-exilic Psalmist can say, "As a father pities his children,

¹ Kuenen, *Hibbert Lectures*, E.T., p. 115.

² Cp. also 2 Sam. xxi. 1; xii. 14 (see Q. P. B.); Gen. iv. 10; xviii. 20, 21.

so Yahveh pities them that fear him," this does not accurately represent the antique conception of Yahveh. To the Psalmist's ancestors Yahveh was a God who punished any insult to himself with extreme severity.¹

(3.) As the God of the tribe, Yahveh champions Israel to victory against its foes. The purity of the retributive action of God is qualified by his favouritism. In the song of Deborah the righteous deeds of Yahveh seem equivalent to Israel's victories over its enemies (Judges v. 11).

(4.) The identification in responsibility of the individual with his family, both present and to come, or with his race, leads to strange consequences in the doctrine of retribution. It is quite natural that God should visit the virtues and the vices of the fathers upon the children. The mercy of God is shown in allowing goodness to transmit its influence further than sin. To the third and fourth generation, according to the Second Commandment, is the crime of the sinner brought home to his descendants; to the thousandth generation the virtue of the good. It is not the mark of God's injustice, but of his longsuffering mercy, if the punishment of a sinner is deferred till after his death, and allowed to fall upon his son. It is not unjust that the religious crime of an individual should be visited upon the entire community, still less that the virtues and vices of a monarch should be reflected in the prosperity or the affliction of his subjects.²

(5.) The methods of divine retribution in antiquity are purely material. Reward and punishment are limited to the earthly life, the former consisting in the long enjoyment of earth's good things, the latter, in the want of them and in a premature death.

¹ Cp. 1 Sam. vi. 19; 2 Sam. vi. 7; 2 Sam. xxiv. 1; *per contra*, 2 Sam. vi. 11.

² Gen. xii. 17, xx. 18; Ex. xx. 5, xii. 29; Lev. xx. 5; Joshua vii. 11; xxii. 17-20; 1 Sam. iii. 13; 1 Kings xxi. 29, xi. 12; 2 Sam. xxi. 1. A number of other instances are collected by Gunning in his interesting essay, *De goddelijke vergelding, hoofdzakelijk volgens Exod. xx. 5 en Ezech. xviii. 20* (1881). The Greek parallels are very interesting. See Schmidt, *Die Ethik der Alten Griechen*, vol. i., chap. 1.

It does not lie within the province of the eighth century Prophets to deal specifically with all these peculiarities. The question of individualism, for instance, is not yet raised. They foretell collective punishment for collective guilt, or appeal to the nation as a whole to repent of its iniquities. Yet Amos draws a distinction between the rich oppressors and the suffering poor, though he does not explain how far the latter would escape from the catastrophe which is approaching. A characteristic doctrine of Isaiah is that of the Remnant, who are to be spared in the judgment, and to form the nucleus of the new or Messianic Israel. He seems to attribute to the judgment process a cleansing and sifting character. When the storm has passed, those who have been spared will turn wholly to God (x. 20, 21; iv. 3, 4). But elsewhere, it is said to be the "humble" and the "needy" (עָנִיִּים, אֲבִי־יָדַיִם, semi-ethical terms already), who *will be spared* (xxix. 19).

It is Ezekiel who first prominently discusses the religious difficulties of social solidarity. There are (see Postscript) traces of individualism before his time, but he is the first to offer a theoretic solution of the problem.

To the old view that the teeth of the children are necessarily, and without injustice, set on edge by the sour grapes which the fathers have eaten, he opposes a marked and exaggerated individualism. "The soul that sins, it (alone) shall die." The idea of vengeance is abandoned. "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." This is the teaching of Ezekiel, and the death he refers to is not death in the ordinary course of nature, but the death of "the Judgment." In these Judgments, only the sinner shall fall. This teaching was intended to meet immediate contemporary need. The exiled Jews imagined that they were suffering for their fathers' sins, from the consequences of which it was impossible to escape. They seem to have believed that the wrath of God weighed heavily upon the whole house of Israel, and to have looked forward to further exhibitions of God's judgment till the whole nation should be utterly consumed away.

Ezekiel had himself preached against the exiles, and threatened them with punishment. He is, therefore, at pains to point out that this punishment shall only overtake the guilty, while those who, at the moment of the judgment, are acting virtuously shall preserve their souls alive. His doctrine is mechanical, but laid the foundation for further developments. In the post-exilic literature this theory of individual retribution is emphasized, and leads to peculiar difficulties of its own. For if the misfortunes of a nation may be set down to national wrongdoing, it is much more dangerous to apply the same principle to the individual. The ground is laid for the antinomies that perplexed the authors of Job and Ecclesiastes.

The wicked do not always suffer; the righteous are not always prosperous. How does this agree with Divine justice?

As regards the prosperity of the wicked, it is occasionally suggested that through the solidarity of society, evil doers may be sometimes spared by the very existence of their righteous neighbours. Thus, even in a pre-exilic story, ten righteous men would have sufficed to ward off the merited punishment from Sodom, and in Jonah the ignorant children and the very cattle are put forward as a good and sufficient reason why God should not destroy a city (wicked though it was) of the heathen world. But the teaching of Jonah is exceptional, and even so spiritual a mind as the author of Psalm lxxiii. can only account for the prosperity of the wicked on the assumption that sudden and overwhelming calamity awaits them before their death.

The misfortunes of the righteous, when disconnected from the experiences of the nation, are either regarded as inexplicable, or it is supposed that God has sent such sufferings as a trial and a discipline. This educational view of suffering is not much earlier than the Exile. It is already indicated in 2 Sam. vii. 14, and taught more fully in Psalms cxix. 67, 71, xciv. 12, 13; Proverbs iii. 11, 12; Job v. 17, xxxiii. 19.

Midway between the individual and the nation is the

unique picture of the suffering Servant, with its unique explanation of suffering as undergone consciously and of set purpose because of the sins and for the well-being of others. Such a sufferer was Jeremiah; yet the idea that "by his stripes" his people would be healed seems never to have occurred to him. His absolute fidelity to his vocation and his God rests upon the plain conviction that such was his duty, such the will of the Divine Power which he could not choose but obey. That central idea, which the great unknown Prophet of the Exile conceived, of the intercession and suffering of the Servant, which could transfigure human suffering into something akin to joy, was not adopted by any subsequent writer in the Hebrew canon.¹

But the religious thought and imagination even of the post-exilic period were more often connected and concerned with the nation than with the individual. The tendency of the age was to ascribe the national condition to the direct intervention of God. The history of Israel is a holy history, in which God interferes directly. Thus its past shaped itself to the minds of pious Jews as one constant example of Divine retribution. The scheme of the Book of Judges shows this tendency clearly in its well-known rhythmic repetition of sin, punishment, contrition, and deliverance. In Chronicles every adversity that befalls the nation is ascribed to some particular sin. The priestly or Levitical author of this book almost invariably represents this sin as a deflection from the proper worship of Yahveh. In this respect he outdoes the Deuteronomistic redactor of the books of Samuel and Kings. And if the parallel accounts of Kings and Chronicles are compared, it will be seen that the latter brings in the theory of divine retribution to account for the facts, or modifies the facts to suit the theory, far more frequently than is the case in Kings. Most curious is his explanation of the calamities which befell Hezekiah and Josiah. The death of Josiah had been

¹ That the righteous may have to suffer for the wicked unwillingly is suggested 2 Macc. vi. 12.

an awful blow to pious believers ; the Chronicler, however, attempts to account for it upon the usual principle. It is just possible that the words attributed to Necho may have some historical foundation. But purely the Chronicler's invention must be Necho's ascription of his warning to the command of God (2 Ch. xxxv. 21, 22 ; xxxii. 25, etc., etc.). Thus in Josiah's case, as in all others, the Chronicler insists upon the truth of the old position : no suffering without sin. This theory might be accepted without much embarrassment as regards the past, but present national calamity was often a puzzle to the community which as a whole, and contrasted with the heathen world, obeyed the Law. And this difficulty led both to a recrudescence of earlier ideas, and to a new development.

In the old preprophetic days God's retributive dealing with Israel was, as stated above, limited by his favouritism. But since the famous dictum of Amos, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities," the idea of mere favouritism, without a moral motive, as accounting for the Divine protection of Israel, had been abandoned. On the other hand, religious particularism was never keener than in the post-exilic period. But the favour of God was justified, for Israel was regarded as more righteous than the nations of the world. The national foes are identified with the enemies of God ; with them God deals not upon any principle of retributive justice, but with that measureless violence which characterizes his action in any insult offered to himself. If, then, Israel's foes are more prosperous than Israel, this cannot be because they are more righteous ; the chastisement of Israel must be a blessing in disguise.

This disciplinarian interpretation of Israel's sufferings passes in some of the Apocryphal books into the theory that God's method of dealing with erring Israel has always been educational. As a father, God has admonished and tried the Israelites ; the nations, as a severe king, he has punished and condemned. In a notable passage in the second book of the Maccabees

the punishment of the Israelites is contrasted with the forbearance shown to the heathen nations. "It is a token of God's great goodness, when wicked doers are not suffered any long time, but forthwith punished. And not as with other nations, whom the Lord patiently forbears to punish, till they be come to the fulness of their sins, so dealeth he with us, lest that, being come to the height of sin, afterwards he should take vengeance upon us." (2 Macc. vi. 13-15.) The author of the Wisdom of Solomon, who also adopts this particularist perversion of the doctrine, and does not even hesitate to ascribe the method of the *lex talionis* to God¹ (xi. 16), was happily inconsistent enough to further develop the educational theory of suffering by connecting it with repentance. God chastens offenders "by little and little," and even "winks at" some of their sins that they may amend their ways, and return to God (xi. 23, xii. 2. Cp. also xi. 10, xii. 22; 2 Maccabees vii. 33; Judith viii. 27).

The indefinite postponement of the Messianic age upon the return from Babylon caused a powerful recrudescence of the idea that the former sins of the nation are still being visited upon a comparatively guiltless generation. Men call themselves sinners because of their fathers' iniquities, and confess sins which are not their own, but their ancestors' (Daniel ix. 5, 16, 20; Tobit iii. 3; Baruch iii. 5-8). And, while one noble outburst in a Maccabean psalm expresses the avowed conviction that it was for God's sake that martyrdom had befallen the faithful (Ps. xlv. 22), many more were content to find resignation in the mournful assumption of unknown secret sins, or in the higher view of the universal sinfulness and frailty of the human creature (Ps. cxix. 67, xix. 13, xc. 9; Baruch ii. 8, 12; 2 Macc. vii. 32).

Thus the post-exilic period, so far as it is represented by the Old Testament and the older Apocryphal books, still maintains the doctrine of Divine retribution, and upon the whole still upholds the theory that suffering and mis-

¹ The writer of Wisdom has his better moments (xi. 23, xii. 2, 8, 10).

fortune imply preceding sin. But it is only in the priestly elements of the Pentateuch and in the books of Chronicles that remnants of the old notion of violent and fatal retribution following upon the violation of God's holiness still survive (Ex. xxviii. 35, 43; Lev. x. 2-7, xvi. 2; Num. i. 53, iv. 26, viii. 19, xvi. 46, xvii. 12; 1 Ch. xv. 13; 2 Ch. xxvi. 19). Elsewhere, so far as Israel is concerned, this semi-physical reaction of offended Deity is quite overcome. In God's dealings with Israel the doctrine of measure-for-measure retribution is abandoned. He does *not* deal with us after our sins; he does *not* reward us after our iniquities. The theory of Divine retribution in general was, however, never given up, whether for the community or the individual. Indeed, the desire to explain all the details of life's phenomena by a religious teleology seems to have greatly increased in the post-exilic period, and for many centuries no teacher arose to declare that "God makes his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." An absence of general belief in a compensatory future life (till well on in the Maccabean period) tended to strengthen the doctrine of retribution. The native Hebrew character was also likely to confirm the hold which it possessed over men's minds. The Hebrew is little touched by the spirit of asceticism, and the only kind of idealism congenial to him is the idealism of religion. That is why he tends to become markedly material when religion slips from his grasp. And that is also why the doctrine of retribution appears so often in a rather gross external form. For the ordinary, external joys of life have always seemed to him very real and precious; far more real and far more precious must they have been at a time when the belief in a future life, of which the joy is more naturally conceived as spiritual, is wholly wanting.

But even before the doctrine of a future world had become part of the general religious consciousness among the Jews, the reward of the righteous was not always conceived as limited to the material. The Psalter—the highest monument of post-exilic piety—is filled from end to end

with the higher joys of religion, and its noblest passages dwell with fervour upon the bliss of spiritual communion with God. In the Book of Proverbs the wisdom to which the sage exhorts his disciple is supposed to bestow upon her lover something higher than riches, honour or length of days. It is commonly supposed that a religious law must depend for its sanction upon outward rewards. Thus we find Professor Kuenen saying, "Eudæmonism and legalism are inseparable. So long as religion is believed to lie in the execution of legal injunctions, its reward will be conceived as an outward blessing, attached by God himself to the due performance of these precepts, and it will be valued mainly as a means to the attainment of this reward."¹ Now, it is true that Deuteronomy lays enormous stress upon the eudæmonist motive. Over and over again it promises external blessings as a reward for obedience to the law of God. But that we must not draw too general a deduction from this would seem clear when we remember, on the one hand, that eudæmonism as a moral motive is not wholly absent even from the prophets; and, secondly, that the priestly legislation curiously differs from Deuteronomy in this respect. The "legal" Ezekiel, while not ignoring "outward blessings," has a higher inducement to offer as well—the presence of God within the community (xxxvii. 27, xlvi. 35). The author of Lev. xxvi. also combines this double motive (Lev. xxvi. 4-12). In the *Priestercodex* itself the appeal to "outward blessings" seems to be wanting altogether; the higher motive of Ezekiel and Lev. xxvi. alone remaining (Ex. xxix. 45). The priestly legislators do not seem inclined to make concessions to the lower instincts of the people. They are to set the ideal of holiness continually and of fixed purpose before their minds, and they are not to seek after the pleasure of their own eyes. Thus the true means through which the later Judaism effectually triumphed over the externality of the doctrine "virtue is

¹ Schetsen uit de Geschiedenis van Israel. X. De Dood van Josia Nieuw en Oud, 1866, p. 271.

rewarded ; therefore be virtuous," will hardly seem credible to those who have formed their judgments upon the basis of the current theological text-books. That very thing which is commonly believed to have debased the religion of the prophets to a formal and mechanical creed, without *abandon* or spirituality, is in reality the very instrument which secured the permanent overmastery of idealism. That instrument is the Law. The truth of my proposition for the Rabbinical period will probably be shown by another writer ; but the beginning of the process is already indicated within the Bible itself. In Psalm cxix. the conception of the fulfilment and the study of the Law for its own sake, and as its own reward, is already discernible. The community, in the midst of trouble, still finds its peculiar joy in the Law of its God (ver. 143). Its deepest prayer is, "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments ; for therein do I delight." Impossible as it now may be for many of us to look at the Law from the same ideal point of view or with the same enthusiasm as the Psalmist, it would be wrong not to recognise how great is the debt which Judaism, though indirectly, must always owe to it. And among other results of this Torah-worship, for such the love of the Law practically became, none is more important than that it should have secured for Judaism the triumph of the doctrine that virtue or religion, goodness or the love of God is, and always must be, its own reward.

P.S.—There is no doubt that the individualising of the doctrine of Divine retribution was first seriously attempted in the exile by Ezekiel. But whether there are no *indications* of this doctrine in the pre-exilic literature is another question. Stade's view that there are none is, I think, exaggerated. The passages in Jeremiah, which, if genuine, would settle the matter, are by him regarded as *sekundär*. They are Jer. xii. 1, 2, xvii. 5-10, xxxii. 18, 19. Kuenen upholds the authenticity of these verses. In xxx. 29 the justice of the proverb of the sour grapes is acknowledged for his own age, while in the Messianic age it is to become obsolete. Then we have Isaiah xxxiii. 15. Here Kuenen and Stade are again at issue. While both are agreed that xxxiii., like xxxii., does not belong to Isaiah, Kuenen

against Stade upholds a pre-exilic date. As regards the particular passage xxxiii. 15f (which, as Stade points out, *Z.A.W.* 1884, p. 259, contains ideas which point to *eine reine individuelle Vergeltungslehre*) Kuenen only says: "Its individualistic character and the distinction which it draws between the wicked and the just in Zion place it outside the sphere within which Isaiah still moves; it was only a century after him that the national conception of Yahvism gradually made way for the more personal conception." (*Onderzoek* II., p. 87.) Moreover, outside the prophetic literature (I assume Isaiah iii. 10, 11 to be a gloss) there are traces of this more individual conception. There is David's exclamation, "These sheep, what have they done?" in which the punishment of sin is thought to justly include a man's family, but not a yet wider circle. There is the Deuteronomic Law, "Every man shall be put to death for his own sin," on which principle Joash acted in punishing the servants, but not the children of the servants, who had slain his father, as the redactor of the book of Kings is at pains to point out to us. In Deut. vii. 10, the Second Commandment is clearly modified intentionally when it is said that "God keeps covenant and mercy with those who love him to a thousand generations, but repays those who hate him to their face." Stade, like Wellhausen, would separate Deut. iv. 44-xi. from the legislative portion of the book, xii.-xxvi., and assign these chapters to the exile, but Kuenen upholds the unity of authorship, and with that the pre-exilic date. Again, in the story of Abraham pleading with Yahveh before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, a near approach is made to the "*individuelle Vergeltungslehre*." Not only is the principle laid down that the few righteous should save the lives of the many wicked, which one might call an instance of inverted solidarity, but the strong words are used "that be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the judge of the whole earth do right?"¹ When Moses, after the worship of the golden calf, implores for the people the Divine forgiveness, he asks that God, if he will not pardon their sin, may blot him out of the book he has written. Then God replies: "Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." Here again is a trace of an individualizing doctrine.

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¹ In the story of Achan, one man sins, and the wrath of God is heavy upon the whole community; but in the rebellion of Korah, which belongs to P. and his school, Moses and Aaron protest against this very principle in the words, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?"

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT.

MY first impulse on being asked to contribute a few pages on this subject was to reply that the New Testament presents no single and special doctrine on this subject at all; that it does present a certain positive doctrine of *salvation*, but that the implicit consequences of this are left to be drawn out in manifold and different ways; and that the negative consequences are left especially vague and undetermined. The general result of my subsequent inquiries has been mainly to strengthen my first impression.

I know that there are many liberal theologians who hold that one must derogate, not merely from the *authority* of Jesus, but from his candour and integrity as a teacher, if he maintains that Jesus used the doctrinal expressions of his people and his time without a conscious endorsement of them. To some of these he has given, no doubt, his own interpretations and limitations; others he adopts without any such specialising of the signification in which he uses and transmits them. Are we to suppose that he stamps them alike with his authority, and builds them into the theological fabric of his Church?

The affirmative answer to this question seems to be by no means confined to those who, on the one hand, declare the finality of the Church in matters of faith, or, on the other, trust to the sufficiency of a verbally-inspired record. Far outside these circles there is a prevalent feeling that Jesus, if in no other character than that of the founder of a new religion, must have given to the world a consistent and systematic *body of teaching* on all the subjects of man's perpetually-renewed inquiry as to the facts of religion. Is not this conception founded upon the absence of what, for want of a better expression, may be called the historic

sense, and upon that confusion of the realms of literature and dogma against which Mr. Matthew Arnold so strongly protested? When we consider the real circumstances of the life of Jesus as a teacher, what are the facts? The synoptical Gospels show us a ministry of a year or fifteen months; they record the *incidents* of less than a tenth in aggregate of that space of time. And as to the teaching, they represent Jesus as coming forward only upon the imprisonment of John the Baptist, in order that his word of prophetic warning might not want a spokesman, with no other gospel than "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." His further words are the results of a widening experience; they are struck out of his mind and heart by contact with the actual needs and questionings of men. Nothing can be more misleading than to suppose that the "Rüsttag," as Keim calls it—the long period of preparation for his public work which Jesus spent in the obscurity of his home—was spent in the elaboration of a doctrinal system, though the basis of this conception is not far to seek. It is found, surely, in the fact that the First Gospel opens the distinctive mission of Jesus with "the Sermon on the Mount"—a body of affirmative teaching in which the new precepts are sharply differentiated from those given to "them of old time." Critics have pointed out that Matthew¹ hastens over a period of gradually-widening ministrations in the synagogues and villages of Galilee (Mark i. 21, Luke iv. 14, etc.) in his desire to reach the inaugural sermon; some hold, as Augustine did, that he has taken, as the kernel of this, a later doctrinal address to the disciples; some hold, with Keim, that he has compounded with this an earlier address to the Galilæan people. But surely a special theory applied to this passage or that will not explain the appearance in the midst of narrative of such blocks of discourse as we have in

¹ As questions of authorship cannot be discussed in passing, let me say that I am using the titles of New Testament books in the usual conventional way.

Matt. v. to vii., x., xiii., xxiii. to xxv. People still speak as if they supposed that Jesus delivered set orations, and these were taken down in shorthand and edited from reporters' notes—a thing not to be wondered at, perhaps, when we find Schleiermacher endeavouring to explain the discrepancies between the Sermon on the Mount in Luke (ch. vi.) and the same sermon in Matthew, by such a consideration as this:—"Our reporter seems to have had a less favourable point for listening, and, in consequence, not to have heard everything, and occasionally to have lost the thread of the discourse," etc. Let me endeavour to state, in the fewest possible lines, what I believe to be the true view as to the preservation of the sayings of Jesus—a view which must necessarily have an important bearing upon the material furnished by the Gospels for the investigation of any particular doctrine.

It must be granted that the purpose of writing a life of Jesus was not likely to be entertained by his followers of the first age. There was no future to be benefited by the history; before that generation passed away the age would be ended, the Son of Man returned, and the kingdom of God established. Such was the belief of that circle of disciples and friends who alone knew "all that Jesus began both to do and teach." And in this, at least, Paul was at one with them; to have "known Christ after the flesh" was to him as nothing compared with the knowledge of him as a quickening spirit, and the short earthly life of Jesus was but a preparing of the way for that more glorious coming which "we that are alive" should witness. It was only when the "fathers fell asleep"—the men who could be in any way reckoned as belonging to the generation which had seen Jesus, passed away, and still "all things were as they had been from the beginning"—that the necessity of providing a historical record for the future would dawn upon the Christian mind. Credentials must now be furnished for a Church which has to bear a continuous testimony in a world which seems likely to last.

The question, In what form would the biographical material present itself? is a difficult one to answer. What were the *διηγήσεις* that had appeared from many hands¹ before the compiler of the Third Gospel undertook his work? Had the various currents of tradition set so hopelessly in different directions that after a Matthew-Mark narrative of the life of Jesus has gained respect in one part of the Christian world, it is possible for a re-working of documents at least as valuable to give us all the special matter, narrative and didactic, of Luke—and, after all, leave room for a wholly new presentation of the life of Jesus, with new localities and surroundings, in the Gospel of John? These questions drive us back to another, What had the Church been teaching all this time? or, at least, what was there, beyond a common hope, to furnish a centre of unity, a matter of common faith, to all the scattered Christian communities? Certainly not a narrative uniformly accepted. Rather, a common treasure of religious and moral teaching, orally transmitted, and believed to consist of the “oracles of the Lord,” the words of Jesus himself. I need scarcely remind my readers how natural it was that a new law, enunciated on the soil of Palestine, should be treated as a kind of *Mishnah*. Just as the *Mishnah* was not committed to writing until there was ground for fearing that it might be lost altogether in the extirpation of the Jewish schools, so, I should be inclined to suggest, it might be the scattering of the Church of Jerusalem at the period of the siege that prompted the first writing down of the teaching of Jesus. But I would urge that the occurrence in Christian literature of words of Jesus not contained in any Gospel, and yet quite probably his, and Papias’s preference of the *λόγια* he could gather for himself from the “living and surviving voice” to those which might be read in such a collection as he attributes to Matthew, point alike to a primitive feeling that oral transmission was the proper vehicle of the Church’s special

¹ Luke i. 1.

teaching. And when we come to examine a Gospel such as that of Matthew, and find that it consists mainly of five large blocks of discourse, after each of which the narrative is resumed with the words: "It came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings,"¹ we can hardly resist the conclusion that these *λόγια*-masses existed much in the shape in which we have them, before they were imbedded in any narrative whatever.

And when, further, we find perpetually that a striking passage occurs *twice* in the Gospel—once in a long discourse, and again in the course of the narrative, with some attribution of *occasion*—we are naturally inclined to suppose that so it was felt that the words, as strung together for purposes of teaching, were subject to an artificial arrangement, there should have been an accompanying, but informal, lore of anecdote, that could restore to a striking passage here and there its time, place, and circumstance, revive the question that called forth the answer, and give life and point to words almost unmeaning. I believe that an examination of Matthew and Luke shows the gradual process of the disintegration of the *λόγια*-blocks; they break up here and there like ice-floes, and the pieces drift into the narrative; sometimes the piece is too big, scarcely manageable, and consists partly of strange matter that will not fit the occasion with which it finds itself allied. And in the blocks themselves how often do we find that mere convenience or caprice of memory has dominated in the stringing together of their component parts. The subject rules at the outset, perhaps; and then we have, in a new connection, a passage we know in another and a better, and then we have casual *dicta*, apparently drawn together by a catch-word. See, for example, the passage about serving two masters (compare Matt. vi. 24), occurring in Luke xvi. 13, in a new connection, determined merely by the occurrence of the word "mammon"; in Luke xi. 34, the passage as to the "light of the body,"

¹ Matt. vii. 25; xi. 1; xiii. 53; xix. 1; xxvi. 1.

drawn by the simple coincidence of the word *λύχνος* into connection with the candle and the bushel, with an addition (verse 36, end) to justify the new relation (cf. Matt. v. 15 ; vi. 22); and the chance connections determined by the words *wine* and *salt* in Luke v. 39 ; Mark ix. 50. Such examples might be multiplied indefinitely.

It would not much surprise us if, during a period of oral transmission, the words of Jesus had undergone more than occasionally a fanciful and sometimes a casual rearrangement. But of *reworking* in any definitely doctrinal interest there seems to be wonderfully little, in the Synoptic Gospels at least. The tendencies and sympathies, however—all the divergencies of the first century which prepared the way for doctrinal difference, for heresy and schism, in the second—have left their several marks, hues and tones in emphasis, *nuance*, and application—Judæo-Christian and Ebionite, Pauline and Universalist—as the common treasure of Christian instruction reaches us through one channel of transmission or another. Luke—whose Gospel is in many respects so distinctly Pauline that several of the fathers, if I rightly remember, were quite sure that Paul meant “the Gospel according to Luke” when he spoke of “*my* Gospel” in Rom. ii. 16—nevertheless preserves to us in many places the very atmosphere of the Palestinian churches, to whom Paul was known only as a name of fear, soon to be identified in tradition with Simon Magus, as the arch-opponent of Peter and of the truth. Compare the Beatitudes, in Luke vi. 20, etc., with those of Matt. v.; it is impossible to mistake the application, already given, to those who took the name Ebionite from the fact of their poverty, and comforted themselves by such denunciation of the rich as meets us again in the Epistle of James (compare Luke vi. 24—26 with James v. 1—6). Luke also furnishes us with the parable of Dives and Lazarus (ch. xvi. 19—end); where, as Mr. Carpenter remarks,¹ “no *moral* reason is given for the different lots of the rich man

¹ See his recent work *The Synoptic Gospels*, p. 311.

and Lazarus in the next world: their positions are reversed on the simple principle that the one received 'his good things' in his earthly life, the other evil; and this inequality must be redressed." This is exactly the "Ye have received your consolation" of Luke vi. 24. I do not hesitate to attribute to Jesus himself the parable of Dives, and to admit that there is an element in the New Testament doctrine of Retribution which is not moral.

The drift of my preliminary remarks has brought me thus to a point at which an attempt must be made to deal with the earliest stratum of doctrine, with a view to some estimate of the distinctive teaching of Jesus himself. I venture to suggest that a principle of material *compensation* may be recognised in certain words of Jesus, which it is by no means necessary to consider either as a special doctrine of his own, or as impressed upon his teaching by a line of Ebionite disciples. That the Ebionites did treasure such words, and let none of them fall to the ground, we may well believe. But because Jesus advised the young ruler to sell all that he had, and give it to the poor, it is not true that he identified poverty with sanctity; because he promised to those who had lost houses and lands for his sake, "manifold more in this present world, and in the world to come life everlasting," it does not follow that he reduced self-sacrifice to an advantageous commercial transaction. As long ago as the day of the Book of Job, the easy theory represented in the words "Acquaint now thyself with God; thereby good shall come unto thee, and thou shalt have plenty of silver" had hopelessly broken down. You might see the wicked flourish, and never have the satisfaction of seeing him wither away.

But the immediate influence of the Messianic element of Hebrew prophecy had turned men's eyes towards a scheme of recompense wider than the life of the individual. The elements of this present world, when looked at from the Divine side, and in the interests of a kingdom of God, undergo some startling inversions. An outcast and oppressed

"remnant" becomes the political centre of the world; all human estimate of value is reversed; the Lord uplifts the poor and needy, and the loftiness of man is bowed down. Because this is a mark of the day of the Lord, because to Christian faith the Messianic hope is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and the Kingdom is come—therefore, to the disciples' eye, the change is made. "He hath cast down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek," says the early Christian hymn (Luke i. 52); and similarly, Paul rejoices that God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak to confound the mighty, "and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" (1 Cor. i. 27, 28). The application made by Jesus of the Messianic passages which chiefly influenced his thought, sent him with a gospel to the poor, and the promise of an inheritance to the meek.¹ And I cannot wonder if, under such influence, and before his thought of the Kingdom of God reached its most mature and spiritual form, he spoke as if the best thing the rich man could do were to cast in his lot with the poor, exchange the treasure of the present for the promise of the future, or, at all events, make such a bestowal of the "un-righteous mammon" as may stand him in good stead when the day of the Lord shall come.²

Another element which early Christianity naturally inherited as part and parcel of the Messianic idea must, I suppose, be called un-moral; an element which, transformed from literature into dogma, has led to theological results which are certainly immoral. And it is one which plays the largest part in all the New Testament language as to the judgment of the world. What is the fate of those who reject the Messiah? The disciple looked back, and saw the awful question debated by the prophets of old. The men who were careless and at ease in Zion, whose hearts had

¹ Luke iv. 18.

² Luke xvi. 9.

waxed gross, and their ears dull of hearing, who had apparently no hope and no fear for the future, believing that "Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil;" what was to be said of them? Were they already smitten by a divinely sent dementation as a foretaste of doom—blinded and hardened, that they might not be converted and live? And to one who believed that the Messiah had come, and men had done unto him whatsoever they listed—but that, by the mercy of God, the space of a generation perchance was interposed between the Messiah's appearance as the suffering servant of Jehovah, and his reappearance with power and great glory to set up his kingdom, and that in this space the call to flee from wrath to come was to be carried far and wide, it is no wonder that the issues of the future seemed to hang upon the acceptance or the rejection of the news he had to tell. We are prepared to find in the New Testament a constant recurrence to this one broad issue. It is this, I suppose, which appears to the ordinary Bible reader to make all its teaching turn upon belief or disbelief; and furnishes the authority on which those who should know better construe the mental attitude of one who differs from them into a wilful rejection of salvation.

There is another subject, closely allied to this, on which it seems hopeless to endeavour after precision in the use of language—probably because the language of the New Testament itself was ambiguous at the outset. It is obvious that the Messianic hope, in its earlier forms, had to do with an ending of "the present age," and an inauguration of "the age to come" on earth; with a day of judgment and of wrath, and then the establishment of a pure state, a perfect social life, for the chosen and sanctified, either under the immediate rule of Jehovah himself, or under that of his anointed. It is not necessary to pause and point out how the national and political, and the purely ideal elements in this conception varied and rearranged themselves from time to time; but it is most necessary to note that the whole religious character of this conception

undergoes a complete change before the time of Jesus. The words that referred to "an age to come" are taken to mean "a life to come;" the threatenings of woe, and the promises of bliss are applied to those who have died and who rise again for judgment: and the whole language of salvation no longer refers to a prolongation of life through and beyond "the day of Jehovah," but to attaining to the resurrection of the just. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the doctrine of a future life, in its Palestinian form, involving and depending upon the resurrection of the body, was at first a corollary to the Messianic hope. Not merely the generation that witnesses the "end of the age" is to share the kingdom of God; in simple justice, those who have watched, and waited, and fought, and "died in faith, not having received the promises," must not utterly forego the inheritance of the righteous. So from the Maccabean period onward we have the confident expectation that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Dan. xii. 2). The Pharisees, the distinctly nationalist and popular party in the next century, represented at once the Messianic hope, and the doctrine of a resurrection. Just as Paul has to supplement his words of immediate expectation of the "coming of the Lord" with words of comfort concerning the departed, and show that we "which are alive and remain shall not prevent (*οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν*) them which are asleep," but, on the contrary, the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Thess. iv. 13-17)—so in the Pharisaic teaching, we can readily understand that the doctrine of the resurrection soon became much more than an incident and a make-weight; it began to have a distinct importance of itself, and to impress into its service language that had originally quite different significance. When this earth comes to be less and less regarded as a "theatre of God's judgments," passages of Scripture which originally referred to this life are made to speak of a world to come, and the prophets of Israel are made to preach concerning heaven and hell.

This is exactly the state of things revealed to us by the Targums. "To live," is constantly amplified into "live in life eternal," and "to die" into "to die the second death," e.g., Deut. xxxiii. 6, where "Let Reuben live and not die," comes out in Onkelos as "Let Reuben live in life eternal and not die the second death." And Jonathan twists the words of Isaiah xxxiii. 14, "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"¹ into "Who of us shall dwell in Jerusalem when the wicked shall be judged, to be delivered to Gehenna, the everlasting burnings?"² When we add the evidence of Jewish apocalyptic writings (especially the Books of Daniel and Enoch), we hold the key to most of the language of reward and punishment that meets us in the Synoptic Gospels.

It is, of course, impossible to say how much of the eschatological detail here presented is actually taken by Jesus himself from current beliefs and expressions,—how much is the translation of what he actually said into the thought of those who heard him.³ Palestinian, and without modification⁴: where it was not accepted it was simply dropped, as in the Fourth Gospel. The warning as to the woes which shall precede the last days, in Matt. xxiv. 15-22 (cf. Daniel xii. 1), seems to have had a stamp of intense reality impressed upon it by actual experience of the war of Titus, and is much more moving than anything we find, e.g., in Enoch. The woes (ὠδῖνες) which were to close the old order were the birth-pangs of the new. The

¹ Kuenen translates "a hearth always glowing."

² Further instances will be found in Dr. Pusey's work, *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?* pp. 73-77.

³ "In Bezug auf die Eschatologie vermag im Einzelnen Niemand zu sagen, was von Christus und was von den Jüngern herrührt."—*Harnack Dogmengeschichte*, I., p. 51.

⁴ It is interesting to note how words of Jesus are occasionally adapted for a public outside Palestine: Compare Matt. xxiii. 27 and Luke xi. 44. An instance of absolute perversion is found in John xx. 23, based on entire misunderstanding of the Rabbinical meaning of *binding* and *loosing* in Matt. xvi. 19.

συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος is to take place within the lifetime of those to whom Jesus speaks (Matt. x. 23 ; xvi. 28 ; Luke xxi. 32). This will be immediately followed by "the revelation of the Son of Man." This is the Son of Man, of Daniel vii. 13, and Enoch iv. 6, who shall set up the everlasting kingdom : he has hitherto been concealed by the Most High in the secret place of his own presence (Enoch lxii. 7). I do not believe that in the original use by Jesus of words like the "days of the Son of Man," etc. (Matt. xvi. 27 ; xix. 28 ; xxv. 31 ; Luke xvii. 22, 30 ; xxi. 27), he applied the title to himself.¹ The coming of the Son of Man is followed at once by the resurrection of the dead. We are at once in presence of the question, whether the resurrection itself is a reward ? whether it is partial or general ? and, if partial, limited to the good ? Apparently, according to the earlier conception, the resurrection was not general ; the faithful rose to share the reward of those who lived to see the days of Messiah.² This is under a covenant in which the wicked have no part. Thus one of the persecuted heroes in 2 Macc. vii. 14, says to the tyrant, "As for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life." But, according to the doctrine which gained currency, there was a revival of the wicked for judgment, which could hardly be called a resurrection. The righteous were, so to speak, born again with a new body ; the wicked were as they had been in the underworld. So the general phrase, "resurrection of the *dead*" does not occur, I think, in the Synoptics : we have "the resurrection of the *just*" (Luke xiv. 14) ; their revival is a re-birth (παλιγγενέσια, Matt. xix. 28) ; "they are the children of God, being children of the resurrection" (υἱοὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως, Luke xx. 36). This is, I believe,

¹ See further on this, Mr. Carpenter's appendix on "the use of the term Son of Man," in the work on the Synoptic Gospels, to which reference has already been made.

² Compare the *Didache*, ch. xvi. : "the resurrection of the dead—not, however, of all, but as was said, 'The Lord shall come, and *all the saints* with him.'" Here the Resurrection precedes the Parousia.

very much what Josephus¹ meant to state as Pharisaic doctrine :—*ψυχὴν δὲ πᾶσαν μὲν ἄφθαρτον, μεταβαίνειν δὲ εἰς ἕτερον σῶμα τὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν μόνην, τὴν δὲ τῶν φαυλῶν αἰδίῳ τιμωρίᾳ κολάζεσθαι.*² The resurrection proper is, therefore, glory and honour in itself. Paul uses the general term, *ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν*, but as if it were in itself the end of human ambition (Philip. iii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 21), and equivalent to *δόξα καὶ τιμὴ καὶ ἀφθάρσια* (Rom. ii. 7); and he leaves entirely behind him the post-resurrection imagery to which I must briefly advert. The judgment follows, and “the Son of Man rewards every man according to his works” (Matt. xvi. 27; xxv. 31). There is, according to the parables which speak of the judgment, a two-fold division—sheep or goats, wheat or tares—and the issue is life or death, the joy of the Lord or the outer darkness. The righteous “shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. xiii. 43: cf. Dan. xii. 3; Enoch i. 8). The faithful will be welcomed to a banquet at which they will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the saints of old (Matt. viii. 11). To be next to the president (“in his bosom,” *ἐν τοῖς κόλποις, ἐπὶ τὸ στῆθος*) is the place of highest honour; so Lazarus the beggar is honoured at Abraham’s table.³ The apostles desire to sit next to Jesus and to share his cup (Matt. xix. 28; xx. 21; Luke xxii. 30), in the day of his “glory” (Mark x. 37). The image of the feast, varied sometimes to that of a wedding banquet, occurs constantly in passages that have to do with admission and exclusion, in the coming kingdom. The wicked are shut out; the brightness within, the sounds of merriment and rejoicing, throw into sad contrast the outer darkness, the wailing and gnashing of teeth,

¹ B. J., II., viii. 14.

² This passage is, I think needlessly, explained by Stapfer, as an attempt to illustrate to the Gentile mind the doctrine of resurrection by the analogy of the more general notion of transmigration of souls.

³ In this parable, Luke xvi. 19-31, the joys of the Kingdom and the torments of Gehenna appear to have already befallen the souls in Sheol.

and the fruitless cry, "Lord, open to us." What is the ultimate fate of the rejected? On this point the New Testament again reflects the uncertainty of the popular belief of Palestine; language pointing to an utter destruction, and to punishment of endless duration, seems to be used indifferently. The image of the burning valley, Ge-hinnom (γέεννα), near Jerusalem, which gave its name in popular speech to the entire hell, of which it was believed to be one of the openings—another being in the desert and another in the sea—occurs constantly in the Synoptics, as in the Book of Enoch (liii. 1; lxvii. 4); its name occurs again only in the Epistle of James, which is evidently of Palestinian origin. The fire which consumed the offal of the city, the worms bred of the corruption, furnished additional horrors, wherein Gehenna exactly answered to the prophetic description in Isa. lxvi. 24: "They shall . . . look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." "The vengeance of the ungodly is fire and worms," says Sirach (vii. 17); so also Judith (xvi. 17). Here we have the origin of that dirge-like burden, "The fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"; which, repeated again and again, according to the Received Text, seems to indicate that the passage containing it (Mark ix. 43-48) was once used as a kind of formal commination service in the early Church. "The Gehenna of fire" (Matt. v. 22; xviii. 9); "the furnace of fire" (Matt. xiii. 42, 50); "the eternal fire" (Matt. xviii. 8; xxv. 41), seem, however, by no means to mean always everlasting torment. It seems equally to mean a terrible end, whereby the wicked shall be destroyed. This is the "second death" of the Targums, and of the Apocalypse of John (xix. 6; xxi. 8). Matt. x. 28 speaks of the destruction of both soul and body in Gehenna. It is difficult to settle whether such a phrase as ἀπώλεια αἰώνιος means a "final destruction," or "a destroying process lasting for ever"

(Psalter of Solomon ii. 35, 38 ; iii. 13, 15). The language of the Book of Enoch is, in spite of its constant reference to eternal fires and torments (*e.g.*, lxvii. 9, 13 ; lxviii. 5 ; ciii. 8 ; cviii. 3), very far from clear on this point. One remarkable passage (xxii. 11-14) seems to say there will be a total destruction of some, a second death ; judgment not having overtaken them in their lifetime, they will be punished until the great judgment ; some, however, will not be destroyed, but perpetually confined : " They shall not be annihilated, neither shall they rise." Yet on another page (liii. 2) we read : " The sinners will perish before the face of the Lord of Spirits, and will be cleared away unceasingly from the surface of his earth for all eternity." We are irresistibly reminded of the passage 2 Thess. i. 7-10. It is an early writing—Dr. Davidson makes it Paul's first—and his mind still turns entirely upon the terms of a Messianic salvation. Those who perversely turn away from it shall, on the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, " suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his might." This is, I think, the most explicit statement in all Paul's writings, as to the fate of the reprobate. To him, as the resurrection is *life*, its opposite is *death* ; here the earthly soul is blasted by the light of a divine holiness. The same idea meets us in a Christian Apocalypse, the *Ascension of Isaiah* (iv. 18) : " The Beloved will cause a fire to go forth from himself and consume all the wicked, and they shall be as if they had never been created." What little there is as to the last judgment in the Epistles of the New Testament seems to tell against the doctrine of eternal torment which the Church in general accepted. The Epistle to the Hebrews seems to hold the annihilation of the wicked (Heb. x. 27), and evidence is not wanting of the persistence of this view here and there ; for example, in the *Clementine Homilies* we read (iii. 6) : " The non-repentant, being punished with eternal fire, are consumed."

We are moved to ask, with Reuss : Is the result of this

brief review merely this, that according to the most trustworthy authorities, the teaching of Jesus on the engrossing subject of the final destinies of mankind is simply a repetition of that which the most ordinary rabbi had long been preaching in the synagogue? ¹ I reply that in all this use of language and imagery, there is hardly anything that can be called enforcement or endorsement of doctrine. It is all scenery and background; it is the setting of many a parable; but the thing enforced, the point which is to be made, is not a terror of judgment, or a right view of heaven or hell; but a lesson of patience, love, or duty. The parable of the wheat and the tares finds its centre in "Let both grow together until the harvest"; a lesson to "fret not ourselves because of evil doers," or anticipate the ultimate judgment of God. That of the sheep and the goats reveals the unexpected worth, in the final issues of life, of the simplest kindnesses, and the testing of religion by its power to open the eye to the daily opportunity, and the heart to the most ordinary appeal for aid. When reference is directly made to Jesus, and he is asked his opinion on a matter relating to the life of the world to come, he protests against the extreme materialism of the popular view, and on the general subject of immortality, as against the Sadducees who questioned him, argues on the broadly spiritual basis of "the soul's life in God" (as it would be expressed in modern language): "He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him."²

I would submit that a tolerably exact counterpart to the use by Jesus of the current language with regard to the last judgment is to be found in his references to Satan. Satan appears as the inflictor of physical pains: an afflicted or deformed person is one whom Satan hath bound; he is "The wicked one," the personification of malice: he sows tares among the good seed, and snatches away the good

¹ Reuss: *Histoire de la Théologie Chrétienne*, 3me ed., Vol. I., p. 249.

² Matt. xxii. 23, etc.; Mark xii. 18, etc.; Luke xx. 27, etc. The Rabbinical protest in Beracoth 17a affords a close parallel to Jesus' remonstrance.

sown in man's heart: he is a dæmonic Anti-Christ, whom Jesus, in a moment of exultation, sure of the final victory of goodness, saw "fall from heaven." Yet, I maintain, there is no more a doctrine of Satan in the teaching of Jesus than there is a doctrine of Beelzebub. In all passages where we pass distinctly out of metaphor, and come down to the solemn prose of moral experience, nothing intervenes between man and God: man has to keep "the good treasure of his heart;" to accept responsibility for every lustful thought, every evil word. There is no notion here that either Jesus or God can fight a man's fight for him in the abstract—"destroy the works of the devil," or ensure the sanctity of the coming age by chaining up the old serpent; nor is there any room for erring man to plead that being born into this world, it is no wonder that the Prince of this World should have power over him. Such ideas do not belong to the teaching of Jesus. Both the demonology and the eschatology of popular Christianity are misrepresentations and distortions, destroying all proportion and perspective, of the imagery of early Christian thought.

When we consider that, as I suggested at the outset, the teaching of Jesus only gradually differentiated itself from the teaching of the Pharisees and the general opinion of his people, we can understand that elements which would turn out to be inconsistent might be found co-existing at any time, and might only prove their incompatibility when transferred to other minds, or even to another generation. And this, I believe, to have been the case; to many things which Jesus "came not to destroy," he gave a "fulfilment" which either transformed or superseded them; but he, who was least of all a system builder, might never realize that of two things which found place side by side in his discourse, one could only live at the expense of the other. His teaching as to the *moral* judgment of God, the ultimate sanctions of goodness, and its real rewards, enforces the broadest and the deepest faith in the Divine justice and love, and is impatient of all attempts to tie up

the Divine action as to the future of the soul by any previous arrangement. This teaching is constantly found in conjunction with the language which belongs to the Messianic future, to a judgment which is a triumph for the nation (or for that part of the nation which had believed in it), and a dealing of reward and punishment in which all the details are traditional and local. It is not, I think, trivial in this connection to remark that such juxtaposition may be illustrated by our daily practice and feeling: that, in speaking of things concerning which our speech must needs be symbolical, we resent every attempt to introduce a new symbolism. We find something very material, or painfully realistic, in all new attempts to describe the nature of God, or to paint the life of heaven; while language once just as material has come, in course of reverent usage, to be a natural vehicle of our most spiritual conceptions. Which of us would like to be challenged as to his literal belief in the language which he uses or allows concerning the life to come? There are words in the second Isaiah, and in the concluding chapters of the Apocalypse of John, which live in all hearts; however vague our faith, "Jerusalem, which is above, is the mother of us all." The sound of "harpers harping with their harps," blends restfully with the "voice of many waters"; but when the authoress of "The Gates Ajar" proposes to introduce a piano into heaven, we resent the innovation as warmly as if some principle were violated.

I have given up the hope of doing more, within the limits of this short paper, than indicate the contact of New Testament doctrine with the current opinions of Palestinian Judaism on the subject of retribution. I must, therefore, devote the few lines that remain to the endeavour to point out where the teaching of Jesus on the moral side of man's relation to God separates itself and leads to new and distinct issues.

The Pharisees represented at once national spirit and aspiration, and the most rigorous observance of the law.

Their advocacy of the hope of Israel, their teaching as to future life gave them, as Josephus¹ says, "immense influence among the masses of the people"; while they devoted their days to the study and practice of the law, desiring to become perfect and blameless, fulfilling all the positive, transgressing none of the negative precepts, into which the actual injunctions of the Pentateuch had been drawn out. What was the relation of the law to the future life? It was not merely an *obligation*, it was a *covenant*.² The pious Jew who fulfils the law can claim the promise of life thereby.³ He takes upon himself a burden of duty, involving a daily and hourly watchfulness, such as no Gentile had ever assumed. But as Israel was alone in the service, it was alone in the reward. As Israel among the nations, so was the Israelite among men: he kept the law, and thereby earned a glory which the *ἄνθρωπος* could not share. The standard in the two cases is different.⁴ There is a character of its own about the virtue of the man who is *just* and *perfect* according to the law, due to its being formed exactly on the lines of God's own ordinances. It is no wonder that such a conception led to externality of observance and impoverishment of heart. The Talmud itself testifies sufficiently as to the dangers which beset the diligent legalist—his fever of moral anxiety about petty things, and his weakness in the direction of seeking glory of men; in one sarcastic passage it describes the Pharisee who runs about asking if any one can tell him anything he has omitted to do, just like the young man who came to Jesus to ask if he had any new views as to the things necessary to eternal life. And there were great teachers who pointed back, as Jesus did, from the mint, anise, and cummin, to the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith;⁵ from the ceremonial details to the greatest commandments of all—love to God and love

¹ A. J., XVIII. i. 3.

² Schürer, *N. T. Zeitgeschichte*, II. 419.

³ Lev. xviii. 5; Gal. iii. 12; 2 Macc. vii. 36.

⁴ Romans ii. 12.

⁵ Matt. xxiii. 23.

to man. Jesus does more. He protests against the whole conception of God's estimate of man's life and service, and of man's attitude towards the Supreme Judge, which was involved in the theory of a series of obligations arranged by God for the purpose of enabling man to acquire merit in his eyes. God was conceived as keeping a kind of ledger-account against each of his servants, who had at any moment a balance on the right or on the wrong side. On this balance his fate is to depend "when the books are opened, and the judgment set." All the language of the parables about accounts, debts, and bills depends upon this idea. It is thus expressed in words attributed to R. Akiba:¹ "Everything is foreseen, and freewill is given. And the world is judged by grace (? goodness); and everything is according to work."² The office is open, and the broker gives credit; and the ledger is open, and the hand writes; and whoever will comes and borrows; and the bailiffs go round continually every day, and exact from a man, whether he will or not . . . and the judgment is a judgment of truth." Jesus is always protesting that God is a loving father, not an exacting creditor. He is, as a fact, always forgiving us. Do we think well of ourselves, and thank God that we are not as other men are? He declines to accept us at our own valuation, but comforts a publican and welcomes a prodigal, at whom we felt perfectly justified in looking askance. We can no more determine the relative merits of men by any standard of our applying, can no more settle our precise place in the kingdom of God, than we can cut and carve the daily providence of God to suit our notions of human desert. He makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust. He is kind to the unthankful

¹ *Pirke Aboth* III., 24, 25, ed. C. Taylor.

² M. Derenbourg translates: "Everything depends on the greater number of deeds (which a man has done)." Cf. 4th Esdras vi. 49. "Thou hast a treasure of works laid up with the Highest." This seems to be the Catholic doctrine of merit, against which the early Protestants revived, in an extreme form, the objection of Jesus, in their doctrine of grace.

and evil. If men will follow him in this, their reward is in the love they share; they shall be the "children of the Highest."¹ Recount, if you can, in the light of such a view of God, your merits in his service; have you done more than your duty?² and if you have done well, are you aggrieved that God's mercy is wider than the covenant which was your hope? that the wasted lives are gathered up, that the bruised reed is not broken, and the smoking flax not quenched? Because the elder brother has had his years of peaceful assurance, must the door be shut against the spendthrift who comes home at last? Because, in our covenant, "we agreed for a penny a day," must we grumble that God's mercies, far and wide, are always up-setting our theory of proportionate wages?³ Do we not find ourselves, when once our sympathies are touched, refusing to weigh all action with one scale and one weight—looking, as it were, into the sphere in which the widow's mite outweighs the contributions of the wealthy—where "she hath done what she could" is the sublimest eulogy? where, too, what is evil is not all guilt, and to her that loved much, much is forgiven?

These few words will, perhaps, indicate my view of the protest raised by Jesus against a doctrine of legal merit and covenant-salvation. It turns, in his discourses, chiefly around the words Love and Forgiveness: in Paul, who is here most markedly anticipated by Jesus, it turns around the terms Faith and Grace. Jesus pleads for the penitent, whose case is hopeless, if the daily records and the adverse balances are to determine everything. Paul pleads for the Gentile, the *ἄνομος*, who has no righteousness according to the Law, and no part nor lot in the covenant. With all differences, both are at one in maintaining that the final award depends on the relation of the individual soul to God, and that "there is no respect of persons with him."

J. EDWIN ODGERS.

¹ Matt. v. 45-48; Luke vii. 35. ² Luke xvii. 10. ³ Luke xv. 28; Matt. xx. 11.

III. RABBINICAL LITERATURE.

"BLESSED be he who knows." These are the words with which Nachmanides, in his classical treatise on Retribution ("Shaar Haggemul"), dismisses a certain theory of the Geonim with regard to this question; after which he proceeds to expound another theory, which seems to him more satisfactory. This mode of treatment implies that, unsatisfactory as the one or other theory may appear to us, it would be presumptuous to reject either entirely, there being only one who knows the exact truth about the great mystery. But we may indicate our doubt about one doctrine by putting another by its side, which we may not affirm to be more absolutely true, but more probable. This seems to have been the attitude, too, of the compilers of the ancient Rabbinical literature, in which the most conflicting views about this grave subject were embodied. Nor did the synagogue in general feel called upon to decide between these views. There is indeed no want of theodicies, for almost every important expounder of Job, as well as every Jewish philosopher of note, has one with its own system of retribution. Thus Judaism has no fixed doctrine on the subject. It refused a hearing to no theory, for fear that it should contain some germ of truth, but on the same ground it accepted none to the exclusion of the others.

These theories may, perhaps, be conveniently reduced to the two following main doctrines that are in direct opposition to each other, whilst all other views about the subject will be treated as the more or less logical results of the one or other doctrine.

1. There is no death without (preceding) sin, nor affliction without (preceding) transgression (*Sabbath*, 55a). This view is cited in the name of R. Ammi, who quoted in cor-

roboration verses from Ez. xviii. 20, and Ps. lxxxix. 33. Though this Rabbi flourished towards the end of the third century, there is hardly any doubt that his view was held by the authorities of a much earlier date. For it can only be under the sway of such a notion of Retribution that the Tannaim, or doctors of the Mishnah, were so anxious to assign some great crime as the antecedent to every serious calamity by which mankind was visited. The following illustrations of my meaning will suffice:—“Pestilence comes into the world for capital crimes mentioned in the Torah, which are not brought before the earthly Tribunal. . . . Noisome beasts come into the world for vain swearing and for profanation of the Name (of God). Captivity comes upon the world for strange worship and incest, and for shedding of blood and for (not) giving release to the land.”¹ As an example of the misfortune befalling the individual I will merely allude to a passage in *Arachin*, 16a, according to which leprosy is to be regarded as the penalty for immorality, slander, perjury and similar sins.

If we were now to complement R. Ammi's view by adding that there is no happiness without some preceding merit—and there is no serious objection to making this addition—then it would resolve itself into the theory of measure for measure, which forms a very common standard of reward and punishment in Jewish literature. Here are a few instances:—“Because the Egyptians wanted to destroy Israel by water (Exod. i. 22), they were themselves destroyed by the waters of the Red Sea, as it is said, Therefore I will *measure* their former work into their bosom (Is. lxxv. 7).” Whilst, on the other hand, we read, “Because Abraham showed himself hospitable towards strangers, providing them with water (Gen. xviii. 4), God gave to his children a country blessed with plenty of

¹ *Aboth* (ed. C. Taylor), v. 12-15. See also *Sabbath*, 32 *seq.*, and *Mechilta* (ed. Friedmann), 95b.

water (Deut. viii. 1)." Sometimes this form of retribution goes so far as to define a special punishment to that part of the body which mostly contributed to the committing of the sin. Thus we read, "Samson rebelled against God by his eyes, as it is said, Get her (the Philistine woman) for me, for she pleases *my eyes* (Jud. xvi. 21); therefore, his *eyes* were put out by the Philistines (*Ibid.* xviii. 9)"; whilst Absalom, whose sinful pride began by his *hair* (2 Sam. xiv. 25) met his fate by his *hair* (*Ibid.* xviii. 9).¹ Nachum of Gamza himself explained his blindness and the maimed condition of his arms and legs as the consequence of a specific offence in having neglected his duty of succouring a poor man. Addressing the dead body of the suppliant who perished while Nachum was delaying his help, he said, "Let my eyes (which had no pity for your pitiful gaze) become blind; may my hands and legs (that did not hasten to help thine) become maimed, and finally my whole body be covered with boils" (*Taanith*, 21a). "This was the hand that wrote it," said Cranmer at the stake; "therefore it shall suffer first punishment."

It is worth noticing that this retribution does not always consist in a material reward, but, as Ben Azai expressed it in the Mishnah (*Aboth*, iv. 5): "The reward of a command is a command, and the reward of a transgression is a transgression." So again: "Because Abraham showed himself so magnanimous in his treatment of the King of Sodom, and said, I will not take from thee a thread; therefore, his children enjoyed the privilege of having the command of Zizith, consisting in putting a thread or fringe in the border of their garments" (*Chulin*, 88b). In another passage we read, "He who is anxious to do acts of charity will be rewarded by having the means enabling him to do so" (*Baba Bathra*, 9b). In more general terms the same thought is expressed when the Rabbis explained the words, Ye shall sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy (Lev. xi.

¹ See *Mechilta*, 259a, 32b. Gen. Rabbah, ch. 48, and *Tossephtha Sotah*, IV. 7 and parallels.

44) to the effect that if man takes the initiative in holiness, even though in a small way, Heaven will help him to reach it to a much higher degree (*Yoma*, 39a).

Notwithstanding these passages, to which many more might be added, it cannot be denied that there are in the Rabbinical literature many passages holding out promises of *material* reward to the righteous as well as threatening the wicked with *material* punishment. Nor is there any need of denying it. Simple-minded men—and such the majority of the Rabbis were—will never be persuaded into looking with indifference on pain and pleasure; they will be far from thinking that poverty, loss of children, and sickness are no evil, and that a rich harvest, hope of posterity, and good health, are not desirable things. It *does* lie in our nature to consider the former as curses and the latter as blessings; “and if this be wrong there is no one to be made responsible for it but the Creator of nature.” Accordingly the question must arise, How can a just and omnipotent God allow it to happen that men should suffer innocently? The most natural suggestion toward solving the difficulty would be that we are not innocent. Hence R. Ammi’s assertion that affliction and death are both the outcome of sin and transgression; or, as R. Chanina ben Dossa expressed it, “It is not the wild beast but sin which kills” (*Berachoth*, 33a).

We may thus perceive in this theory an attempt “to justify the ways of God to man.” Unfortunately it does not correspond with the real facts. The cry wrung from the prophets against the peace enjoyed by the wicked, and the pains inflicted on the righteous, which finds its echo in so many Psalms, and reaches its climax in the Book of Job, was by no means silenced in the times of the Rabbis. If long experience could be of any use, it only served to deepen perplexity. For all this suffering of the people of God, and the prosperity of their wicked persecutors, which perplexed the prophets and their immediate followers, were repeated during the death-struggle for independence

against Rome, and were not lessened by the establishment of Christianity as the dominant religion. The only comfort which time brought them was, perhaps, that the long continuance of misfortune made them less sensible to suffering than their ancestors were. Indeed, a Rabbi of the first century said that his generation had by continuous experience of misery become as insensible to pain as the dead body is towards a prick of a needle (*Sabbath 13b*). The anæsthetic effect of long suffering may, indeed, help one to endure pain with more patience, but it cannot serve as an apology for the deed of the inflictors of the pain. The question, then, how to reconcile hard reality with the justice of God, remained as difficult as ever.

The most important passage in Rabbinical literature relating to the solution of this problem is the following (*Berachoth, 7a*):—With reference to Exod. xxxiii. 13, R. Jochanan said, in the name of R. José, that, among other things, Moses also asked God to explain to him the method of his Providence; a request that was granted to him. He asked God, Why are there righteous people who are prosperous, and righteous who are suffering; wicked who are prosperous, and wicked who suffer? The answer given to him was according to the one view that the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous are a result of the conduct of their ancestors, the former being the descendants of righteous parents and enjoy their merits, whilst the latter, coming from a bad stock, suffer for the sins of those to whom they owe their existence. This view was suggested by the Scriptural words, "Keeping mercy for thousands (of generations) . . . visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" (*Ibid.* xxxiv. 7), which were regarded as the answer to Moses' question in the preceding chapter of Exodus. Prevalent, however, as this view may have been in ancient times, the Rabbis never allowed it to pass without some qualification. It is true that they had no objection to the former part of this doc-

trine, and they speak very frequently of the "Merits of the Fathers" (זכות אבות) for which the remotest posterity is rewarded; for this could be explained on the ground of the boundless goodness of God, which cannot be limited to the short space of a lifetime. But there was no possibility of overcoming the moral objection against punishing people for sins they have not committed.

It will suffice to mention here that with reference to Joshua vii. 24, 25, the Rabbis asked the question, If he (Achan) sinned, what justification could there be for putting his sons and daughters to death? And by the force of this argument they interpreted the words of the Scriptures to mean that the children of the criminal were only compelled to be present at the execution of their father.

Such passages, therefore, as would imply that children have to suffer for the sins of their parents are explained by the Rabbis to refer to such cases where the children perpetuate the crimes of their fathers.¹ The view of R. José, which I have already quoted, had, therefore, to be dropped, and another version in the name of the same Rabbi is accepted. According to this theory the sufferer is a person either entirely wicked (רשע גמור) or not perfectly righteous (צדיק שאינו גמור), whilst the prosperous man is a person either perfectly righteous (צדיק גמור) or not entirely wicked (רשע שאינו גמור).

It is hardly necessary to say that there is still something wanting to supplement this view, for the given classification would place the not entirely wicked on the same level with the perfectly righteous, and on a much higher level than the imperfectly righteous, who are undoubtedly far superior. The following passage may be regarded as supplying this missing something:—"The wicked who have done some good work are as amply rewarded for it in *this*

¹ See *Mechilta*, 68b and parallels. *Sifra*, 112b. *Pessikta* of R. Kahana, 167b. Cp. *Sanhedrin*, 41a.

world as if they were men who have fulfilled the whole of the Torah, so that they may be punished for their sins in the next world (without interruption); whilst the righteous who have committed some sin have to suffer for it (in this world) as if they were men who burned the Law, so that they may enjoy their reward in the world to come (without interruption)."¹ Thus the real retribution takes place in the next world, the fleeting existence on earth not being the fit time either to compensate righteousness or to punish sin. But as, on the one hand, God never allows "that the merit of any creature should be cut short," whilst, on the other hand, he deals very severely with the righteous, punishing them for the slightest transgression; since, too, this reward and punishment are only of short duration, they must take place in this short terrestrial existence. There is thus established a sort of divine economy, lest the harmony of the next world should be disturbed.

Yet another objection to the doctrine under discussion remains to be noticed. It is that it justifies God by accusing man, declaring every sufferer as more or less of a sinner. But such a notion, if carried to its last consequences, must result in tempting us to withhold our sympathies from him. And, indeed, it would seem that there were some non-Jewish philosophers who argued in this way. Thus a certain Roman official is reported to have said to R. Akiba, "How can you be so eager in helping the poor? Suppose only a king, who, in his wrath against his slave, were to set him in the gaol, and give orders to withhold from him food and drink; if, then, one dared to act to the contrary, would not the king be angry with him?"² There is some appearance of logic in this notion put into the mouth of a heathen. The Rabbis, however, were inconsistent people, and responded to the appeal which suffering makes to every

¹ *Aboth* de R. Nathan, 40a, 59b, and 62b. *Pessikta* of R. Kahana, 73a, and parallels.

² *Baba Bathra*, 10a. See Bacher, *Hagada der Tannaiten*, I., 295.

human heart without asking too many questions. Without entering here into the topic of charity in the Rabbinic literature, which would form a very interesting chapter, I shall only allude now to the following incident, which would show that the Rabbis did not abandon even those afflicted with leprosy, which, according to their own notion, given above, followed only as a punishment for the worst crimes. One Friday, we are told, when the day was about to darken, the Chassid Abba Tachnah was returning home, bearing on his shoulders the baggage that contained all his fortune; he saw a leprous man lying on the road, who addressed him; "Rabbi, do with me a deed of charity and take me into the town." The Rabbi now thought, "If I leave my baggage, where shall I find the means of obtaining subsistence for myself and my family? But if I forsake this leprous man I shall commit a mortal sin." In the end, he made the good inclination predominant over the evil one, and first carried the sufferer to the town (*Kohelet Rabba*, ix.7). The only practical conclusion that the Rabbis drew from such theories as identify suffering with sin were for the sufferer himself, who otherwise might be inclined to blame Providence, or even to blaspheme,¹ but would now look upon his affliction as a memento from heaven that there is something wrong in his moral state. Thus we read in *Berachoth* (5a): "If a man sees that affliction comes upon him, he ought to inquire into his actions, as it is said, Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord (Lam. iii. 40)." This means to say that the sufferer will find that he has been guilty of some offence. As an illustration of this statement we may perhaps consider the story about R. Huna, occurring in the same tractate (p. 7b). Of this Rabbi it is said that he once experienced heavy pecuniary losses, whereupon his friends came to his house and said to him, "Let the master but examine his conduct a little closer." On this R. Huna

¹ See *Aboth* de R. Nathan, 65b and notes.

answered, "Do you suspect me of having committed some misdeed?" His friends rejoined, "And do you think that God would pass judgment without justice?" R. Huna then followed their hint, and found that he did not treat his tenant farmer as generously as he ought. He offered redress, and all turned out well in the end. Something similar is to be found in the story of the martyrdom of R. Simon ben Gamliel and R. Ishmael ben Elisha. Of these Rabbis we are told that on their way to be executed the one said to the other, "My heart leaves me, for I am not aware of a sin deserving such a death"; on which the other answered, "It might have happened that in your function as judge you sometimes—for your own convenience—were slow in administering justice."¹

But even if the personal actions of the righteous were blameless, there might still be sufficient ground for his being afflicted and miserable. This may be found in his relations to his kind and surroundings, or, to use the term now more popular, by reason of human solidarity. Now, after the above remarks on the objections entertained by the Rabbis against a man's being punished for the sins of others, it is hardly necessary to say that their idea of solidarity has little in common with the crude notions of it current in very ancient times. Still, it can hardly be doubted that the relation of the individual to the community was more keenly felt by the Rabbis than by the leaders in any other society, modern or ancient. According to the *Mechilta* (63a) it would, indeed, seem that to them the individual was not simply a member of the Jewish commonwealth, or a co-religionist, but a limb of the great and single body "Israel," and that as such he communicated both for good and evil the sensations of the one part to the whole. In *Leviticus Rabba* (ch. 4), where a parallel is to be found to this idea, the responsibility of the individual towards the community is further illustrated

¹ See *Mechilta*, 57b, and parallels.

by R. Simon ben Yochai, in the following way : "It is," we read there, "to be compared to people sitting on board a ship, one of the passengers of which took an awl and began to bore holes in the bottom of the vessel. Asked to desist from his dangerous occupation, he answered, 'Why, I am only making holes on my own seat,' forgetting that when the water came in it would sink the whole ship." Thus the sin of a single man might endanger the whole of humanity. It was in conformity with the view of his father that R. Eliezer, the son of R. Simon (ben Yochai) said, "The world is judged after the merits or demerits of the majority, so that a single individual by his good or bad actions can decide the fate of his fellow-creatures, as it may happen that he is just the one who constitutes this majority."¹ Nor does this responsibility cease with the man's own actions. According to the Rabbis man is responsible even for the conduct of others—and as such liable to punishment—if he is indifferent to the wrong that is being perpetrated about him, whilst an energetic protest from his side could have prevented it. And the greater the man the greater is his responsibility. He may suffer for the sins of his family which is first reached by his influence ; he may suffer for the sins of the whole community if he could hope to find a willing ear among them, and he may even suffer for the sins of the whole world if his influence extend so far, and he forbear from exerting it for good.² Thus the possibility is given that the righteous man may suffer with justice, though he himself has never committed any transgression.

As a much higher aspect of this solidarity—and as may have already suggested itself to the reader from the passage cited above from the *Mechilta*—we may regard the suffering of the righteous as an atonement for the sins of their contemporaries. "When there will be neither Tabernacle nor the Holy Temple," Moses is said to have

¹ See *Kedushin*, 40b.

² See *Sabbath*, 54a.

asked God, "What will become of Israel?" Whereupon God answers, "I will take from among them the righteous man whom I shall consider as pledged for them, and will forgive all their sins;" the death of the perfect man, or even his suffering being looked upon as an expiation for the shortcoming of his generation.¹

It is hardly necessary to remind the reader of the affinity of this idea with that of sacrifices in general, as in both cases it is the innocent being which has to suffer for the sins of another creature. But there is one vital point which makes all the difference. It is that in our case the suffering is not enforced, but is a voluntary act on the part of the sacrifice, and is even desired by him. Without entering here on the often-discussed theme of the suffering of the Messiah, I need only mention the words of R. Ishmael who, on a very slight provocation, exclaimed, "I am the atonement for the Jews," which means that he took upon him all their sins to suffer for them.² This desire seems to have its origin in nothing else but a deep sympathy and compassion with Israel. To suffer *for*, or, at least, *with* Israel was, according to the Rabbis, already the ideal of Moses. He is said, indeed, to have broken the Two Tables with the purpose of committing some sin, so that he would have either to be condemned together with Israel (for the sin of the golden calf), or to be pardoned together with them.³ And this conduct was not only expected from the leaders of Israel, but almost from every Jew. Thus we read in *Taanith* (11a), "When Israel is in a state of affliction (as, for instance, famine) one must not say, I will rather live by myself, and eat and drink, and peace be unto thee, my soul. To those who do so the words of the Scriptures are to be applied: And in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning, . . . and

¹ See *Exodus Rabbah*, c. 35 and parallels.

² See *Negaim*, ii. 1, and compare *Aruch*, s.v. נָדָה

³ *Exod. Rabbah*, c. 46.

behold joy and gladness. . . . Surely this iniquity shall not be purged out from you till ye die (Is. xxii. 12-14).” Another passage is to the effect that when a man shows himself indifferent to the suffering of the community there come the two angels (who accompany every Jew) put their hands on his head, and say, “This man who has separated himself shall be excluded from their consolations.” (*Taanith, ibid.*)

We might now characterise this sort of suffering as the chastisement of love (of the righteous) to mankind, or rather to Israel. But we must not confuse it with the chastisement of love (יְסוּרִין שֶׁל אֱהָבָה) often mentioned in the Talmud, though this idea also seems calculated to account for the suffering of the righteous. Here the love is not on the side of the sufferer, but proceeds from him who inflicts this suffering. “Him,” says R. Huna, “in whom God delights he crushes with suffering.” As a proof of this theory the verse from Is. liii. 10 is given, which words are interpreted to mean: Him whom the Lord delights in he puts to grief. Another passage, by the same authority, is to the effect that where there is no sufficient cause for punishment (the man being entirely free from sin), we have to regard his suffering as a chastisement of love, for it is said: “Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth” (Proverbs iii. 11).¹ To what purpose he corrects him may, perhaps, be seen from the following passage: “R. Eleazar ben Jacob says: If a man is visited by affliction he has to be thankful to God for it: for suffering draws man to, and reconciles him with God, as it said: For whom God loveth he correcteth.”²

It is in conformity with such a high conception that affliction, far from being dreaded, becomes almost a desirable end, and we hear many Rabbis exclaim, “Beloved is suffering,” for by it fatherly love is shown to man by God; by it man obtains purification and atonement, by it Israel

¹ See *Berachoth*, 5a. ² *Tanchuma*, כִּי תַצֵּא, § 2. Cp. *Mechilta*, 72b.

came in possession of the best gifts, such as the Torah, the Holy Land, and eternal life.¹ And so also the sufferer, far from being considered as a man with a suspected past, becomes an object of veneration, on whom the glory of God rests, and he brings salvation to the world if he bears his affliction with joyful submission to the will of God.² Continuous prosperity is by no means to be longed after, for, as R. Ishmael taught, "He who has passed forty days without meeting adversity has already received his (share of the) world (to come) in this life."³ Nay, the standing rule is that the really righteous suffer, whilst the wicked are supposed to be in a prosperous state. Thus, R. Jannai said, "We (average people) enjoy neither the prosperity of the wicked nor the afflictions of the righteous,"⁴ whilst his contemporary, Rab, declared that he who experiences no affliction and persecution does not belong to them (the Jews).⁵

2. The second main view on Retribution is that recorded in the Tractate *Sabbath* (56*b*) as in direct opposition to that of R. Ammi. It is that there is suffering as well as death without sin and transgression. We may now just as well infer that there is prosperity and happiness without preceding merits. And this is, indeed, the view held by R. Meir. For in contradiction to the view cited above, R. Meir declares that the request of Moses to have explained to him the mysterious ways of Providence was *not* granted, and the answer he received was, "And I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (Exod. xxxiii. 19), which means to say, even though he to whom the mercy is shown be unworthy of it. The old question arises how such a procedure is to be reconciled with the justice and omnipotence

¹ See *Sifré*, 73*b*, and parallels. ² See *Taanith*, 8*b*. ³ See *Arachin*, 16*b*.

⁴ *Aboth*, iv. 15. I have accepted here the explanation of R. Jonah, which is supported by the parallel in *Aboth* de R. Nathan, 33*b*, and also *Berachoth*, 61*b*. See R. Simon Duran's Commentary *סנין אבות* to this passage. Cp. Graetz's *History*, vol. iv., 231. ⁵ See *Chagigah*, 5*a*.

of God. The commentaries try to evade the difficulty by suggesting some of the views given above, as that the real reward and punishment are only in the world to come, or that the affliction of the righteous is only chastisement of love, and so on. From the passages we are about to quote, however, one gains the impression that some Rabbis rather thought that this great problem will indeed not bear discussion or solution at all. Thus we read in a Boraitha: "The angels said to God, Why have you punished Adam with death? He answered, On account of his having transgressed my commandment (with regard to the eating of the tree of knowledge). But why had Moses and Aaron to die? The reply given to them is in the words, Eccl. ix. 2: 'All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and clean and unclean'" (*Sabbath*, 55b). In Tractate *Menachoth*, 29b, we again find a passage in which we are told how, "when Moses ascended to heaven, God showed him also the great men of futurity. R. Akiba was sitting and interpreting the law in a most wonderful way. Moses said to God: Thou hast shown me his worth, show me also his reward; on which he is bidden to look back. There he perceives him dying the most cruel of deaths, and his flesh being sold by weight. Moses now asks: Is this the reward of such a life? whereupon God answers him: Be silent; this I have determined."

It is impossible not to think of the beautiful lines of the German poet:—

Warum schleppt sich blutend, elend,
Unter Kreuzlast der Gerechte,
Während glücklich als ein Sieger
Trabt auf hohem Ross der Schlechte?

Also fragen wir beständig,
Bis man uns mit einer Handvoll
Erde endlich stopft die Mäuler—
Aber ist das eine Antwort?

Still, when examined a little closer, one might perhaps

suggest that these passages not only contain a rebuke to man's importunity in wanting to intrude into the secrets of God, but also hint at the possibility that even God's omnipotence is submitted to a certain law—though designed by his own holy will—which he could not alter without detriment to the whole creation. Indeed, in one of the mystical accounts of the martyrdom of R. Akiba and other great Rabbis, God is represented as asking the sufferers to accept his hard decree without protest, unless they wish him to destroy the whole world. In *Taanith* (25a) again we read of a certain renowned Rabbi, who lived in great poverty, that once in a dream he asked the divine Shechinah how long he would have still to endure this bitter privation? The answer given to him was: "My son, will it please you that I destroy the world for your sake?" It is only in this light that we shall be able to understand such passages in the Rabbinic literature as that God almost suffers himself when he has to inflict punishment either on the individual or whole communities. Thus God is represented as mourning for seven days (as in the case when one loses a child) before he brought the Deluge on the world (*Gen. Rabbah*, c. 27); he bemoans the fall of Israel and the destruction of the Temple (see *Pessikta* 136b), and the Shechinah laments even when the criminal suffers his just punishment (*Mishnah Sanhedrin*, vi., 5). And it is not by rebelling against these laws that he tries to redeem his suffering. He himself has recourse to prayer, and says: "May it be my will that my mercy conquer my wrath, that my love over-rule my strict justice, so that I may treat my children with love" (see *Berachoth*, 7a). If now man is equal to God, he has nevertheless, or rather on that account, to submit to the law of God without any outlook for reward or punishment; or, as Antigonus expressed it, "Be not as slaves that minister to the Lord with a view to receive recompence."¹ Certainly it would

¹ *Aboth*, i., 3., p. 27, ed. Taylor. See also note 8.

be hazardous to maintain that Antigonos' saying was a consequence of this doctrine; but, at any rate, we see a clear tendency to keep the thought of reward (in spite of the prominent part it holds in the Bible) out of view. Still more clearly it is seen when, with reference to Ps. cxii., "Blessed is the man . . . that delighteth greatly in his commandments," R. Joshua ben Levi remarks that the meaning is that the man desires only to do his commandments, but he does not want the rewards connected with them.¹ This is the more remarkable, as the whole content of this chapter is nothing else than a long series of promises of various rewards, so that the explanation of R. Joshua ben Levi is in almost direct contradiction to the simple meaning of the words. On the other hand, also, every complaint about suffering must cease. Not only is affliction no direct chastisement by God in the way of revenge, for, as R. Eleazar teaches: "With the moment of Revelation (that is to say, since moral conduct became law) neither bliss nor adversity came from God, but the bliss comes by itself to those who act rightly, and conversely (*Deut. Rabba*, c. 42); but even when it would seem to us that we suffer innocently, we have no right to murmur, as God himself is also suffering, and, as the Talmud expresses it, 'It is enough for the slave to be in the position of his master' (*Berachoth*, 58b)."

This thought of the compassion—in its strictest sense of suffering-with—of God with his creatures becomes a new motive for avoiding sin. "Woe to the wicked," exclaims a Rabbi, "who by their bad actions turn the mercy of God into strict justice." And the later mystics explain distinctly that the great crime of sin consists in causing pain, so to speak, to the Shechinah. One of them compared it with the slave who abuses the goodness of his master so far as to buy for his money arms to wound him.² But, on the other hand, it becomes, rather incon-

¹ *Abodah Zarah*, 19a. See also *Sifré*, 79b. ² See *ראשית חכמה* I., 9.

sistently, also a new source of comfort; for, in the end, God will have to redeem himself from this suffering, which cannot be accomplished so long as Israel is still under punishment.¹ Most interesting is the noble prayer by a Rabbi of a very late mystical school: "O God, speedily bring about the redemption. I am not in the least thinking of what I may gain by it. I am willing to be condemned to all tortures in hell, if only the Shechinah will cease to suffer."²

If we were now to ask for the attitude of the Synagogue towards these two main views, we would have to answer that—as already hinted at the opening of this paper—it never decided for the one or the other. R. David מרמיקא dared even to write a whole book in defence of Adam (זכור אדם) proving that he committed no sin in eating the fruits of the tree of knowledge against the literal sense of the Scriptures, which were also taken by the Rabbis literally.³ By this he destroyed the prospects of many a theodicy, but it is not known to us that he was severely rebuked for it. It has been said by a great writer that the best theology is that which is not consistent, and this advantage the theology of the Synagogue possesses to its utmost extent. It accepted with R. Ammi, the stern principle of divine retribution, in as far as it makes man feel the responsibility of his actions, and makes suffering a discipline. But it never allowed this principle to be carried so far as to deny the sufferer our sympathy, and by a series of conscious and unconscious modifications, he passed from the state of a sinner into the zenith of the saint and the perfectly righteous man. But, on the other hand, the Synagogue also gave entrance to the very opposite view which, abandoning every attempt to account for suffering, bids man do his duty without any hope of reward, even as God also does his. Hence the

¹ See *Exod. R.*, 30, and parallels.

² See רמתיים צופים 33b.

³ See *Sabbath*, 55b and *Sifra*, 27a.

remarkable phenomenon in the works of later Jewish moralists that whilst they never weary of the most detailed accounts of the punishments awaiting the sinner, and the rewards in store for the righteous, they warn us most emphatically that our actions must not be guided by these unworthy considerations, and that our only motive should be the love of God and submission to his holy will.¹

Nor must it be thought that the views of the Rabbis are so widely divergent from those enunciated in the Bible. The germ of almost all the later ideas is already to be found in the Scriptures. It only needed the progress of time to bring into prominence those features which proved at a later period most acceptable. Indeed, it would seem that there is also a sort of domestication of religious ideas. On their first association with man there is a certain rude violence about them which, when left to the management of untutored minds would certainly do great harm. But, let only this association last for centuries, during which these ideas have to be subdued by practical use, and they will, in due time, lose their former roughness, will become theologically workable, and turn out the greatest blessing to inconsistent humanity.

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¹ See for instance, *מנורת המאור* (Amsterdam, 1720), p. 4, *seq.*, and 94 *seq.*, and much more in the *ראשית חכמה*, in the two chapters *שער האהבה* *היראה* *ושער האהבה*, where also the views of other authors are given.